

A HISTORY OF COPSS

BU-432-M

W. T. Federer
Cornell University

October, 1972

Abstract

A historical sketch of the events leading up to the formation and activities of the Committee of Presidents of Statistical Societies (COPSS) is presented. A fairly complete list of citations to published reports of COPSS activities in THE AMERICAN STATISTICIAN is given. However, not all reports and activities, especially in the early years, were published in this form. The goals of COPSS are to prevent duplication of effort by member societies wherever possible, to better intersociety communication, to strengthen the voice of statistics nationally and in the scientific community, and to maintain autonomy of societies.

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In 1958-59, the American Statistical Association (ASA), the Biometric Society (ENAR), and the Institute of Mathematical Statistics (IMS) initiated discussions to study relationships among statistics societies. Each of the above three organizations often appointed a committee to perform identical duties, and communication among these and other groups was not always what was desired. Thus, in order to eliminate duplication of work, to better communication among statistical societies, and to strengthen the scientific voice of statistics, the ASA, under the leadership of Rensis Likert, Morris H. Hansen, and Donald C. Riley appointed a Committee to Study Relationships Among Statistical Societies (CONTRASTS). This Committee was chaired by Frederick Mosteller. A series of campus discussions was initiated by members of CONTRASTS in order to obtain a broad base of opinion for a possible organization of statistical societies.

A grant of \$9,000 was obtained from the Rockefeller Foundation by ASA to finance a series of discussions on the organizational needs of North American statisticians. Subsequently, an inter-society meeting to discuss relationships among statistical societies was held on Friday evening of September 16, 1960 through Sunday morning of September 18, 1960 at the Sterling Forest Onchiota Conference Center in Tuxedo, New York. Societies represented and their representatives at this meeting are described on page 2 of the October, 1960, issue of THE AMERICAN STATISTICIAN (AMSTAT). Also, Wallace O. Fenn of the American Institutes of Biological Sciences, G. Baley Price of the Conference Board of Mathematical Sciences, and Mary Robinson of Brookings Institute were present. Mr. Fenn described the origin of the American Institute of Biological Sciences (AIBS) and pointed out their accomplishments since organization. Mr. Price discussed the background and importance of the Conference Board of Mathematical Sciences. The main motion for future action that was passed was to the effect "that a federation of societies concerned with statistics should be organized to consider the items discussed at this meeting". A Committee was appointed to draft a proposal for a federation of statistical societies by 1/1/61. A

meeting was held on 12/9/61 to discuss the proposed federation and the roles of ASA, ENAR-WNAR, and IMS in such an organization. A more formal meeting of the Presidents, Secretaries, and other members of the ASA, IMS, and the Biometric Society (ENAR) was held at the Annual Statistics Meetings in December 1961. At this meeting the Committee of Presidents of Statistical Societies (COPSS) was essentially born. It was agreed that the president, the secretary, and one society designated officer of ASA and IMS, the president and secretary of ENAR, the president of WNAR, and one member-at-large would form the COPSS Committee (AMSTAT, October, 1962, page 1). The Committee set up six joint committees (AMSTAT, February, 1962, page 1). The Executive Committee of COPSS was to be composed of the presidents of ASA, ENAR, and IMS and the secretary of ASA, with each president to serve as Chairman of the Committee for four months of the year. The six committees established were:

1. Committee on Professional Standards and Activities
2. Committee on a Brochure on Statistics as a Career
3. Committee on Educational Opportunities (Academic Programs)
4. Committee on Section U (Statistics) of AAAS
5. Committee on Organizational Changes
6. Committee on News and Notes.

Additional committees set up in 1962 prior to, or at the 6/3/62 Meeting of the Executive Committee, were:

7. Committee on Scheduling Meetings
8. Committee to Investigate a Placement Service for Statisticians
9. Committee on a Directory of Statisticians
10. Committee on a Visiting Scientists Program.

A meeting of the full COPSS Committee was held on 9/10/62 to discuss a memorandum prepared by H. L. Lucas on

- i) COPSS and its activities
- ii) Membership of COPSS Committees
- iii) Charges to COPSS Committees
- iv) Committee reports.

The revised version of this report became the official document of COPSS. In

addition to discussing the foregoing, COPSS established the following committees:

13. Committee on Standardization of Symbols and Notations
14. Committee on a Memorial Session in Honor of Sir Ronald A. Fisher.

The COPSS Committee on Organizational Changes and the COPSS Executive Committee held a meeting on 3/1/63 to discuss a number of items dealing with cooperative arrangements among societies in COPSS, including certain possible structural changes within the societies. The items discussed were:

1. A National Committee on Statistics
2. Financial needs of COPSS
3. Liaison with related societies
4. Improvement of inter-society arrangements with respect to the American Statistician
5. Mathematical Statistics Section of ASA
6. Implications of reorganization to IMS
7. Progress in coordination of ENAR and WNAR
8. Recommendations on Sections of ASA, other societies affiliated with ASA, and for improvement in structure and activities of COPSS
9. Joint billings of ASA, ENAR, IMS, and WNAR.

Two meetings of COPSS on 8/26/63 and 9/6/63 were held to consider a National Committee on Statistics, action on a Report on Availability of New Statisticians, review of and reports from COPSS Committees, a Committee on Liaison with Related Societies, on the Problem of Recruiting Census Enumerators, and a proposal for publishing statistical tables. The fifteenth COPSS Committee, Liaison with Statistical Societies, was appointed during the summer of 1963.

At their 1/16/64 meeting, the COPSS Executive Committee considered the distribution of the new edition of "Careers in Statistics", a National Committee on Statistics, recommendations of the Committee on Standardization of Symbols and Notation, suggestions regarding the Liaison Committee, Availability of Statisticians, and other items.

The Visiting Lecturer Program in Statistics was funded by an NSF 3-year grant late in 1962 with the funds used to set up a 1963-64 and 1964-65 program under the chairmanship of J. C. Kiefer. The program is administered by IMS, but was set up as a COPSS committee because of the nature of its activities.

A listing of citations from THE AMERICAN STATISTICIAN to the work of the Visiting Lecturer Program follows:

<u>Year</u>	<u>Month</u>	<u>Page</u>
1964	October	6
1965	October	5
1966	October	12
1967	October	8
1968	October	3
1970	December	2
1971	October	2

At the 12/29/64 meeting of COPSS the member-at-large, W. T. Federer, was elected as Chairman and Executive Secretary of COPSS for a three-year term, 1965-67, was reappointed for a second three-year term, 1968-70, a one-year term in 1971, and a second one-year term in 1972. Since this change the Executive Committee has not met, the ASA and IMS both designated the President-Elect as the other officer on COPSS, and some committees have been added and others disbanded.

It was decided that the minutes of COPSS meetings were of sufficient general interest to be published in THE AMERICAN STATISTICIAN. A listing of minutes of COPSS meetings published follows:

<u>Year</u>	<u>Month</u>	<u>Page</u>	<u>Date of Meeting</u>
1964	February	2	1/16/64
1969	April	37	8/21/68
1970	June	2	8/21/69
1972	April	38	12/27/70
1972	April	40	8/23/71

In addition to the above, the minutes of the Onchiota Conference meeting are given on page 2, October, 1960 of AMSTAT (also see page 41). In the February, 1962, issue of AMSTAT, page 1, in describing ASA tasks for 1962, the work of CONTRASTS and COPSS is described; the first six COPSS Committees that were established are described. A progress report for COPSS is presented in the October, 1962 issue on page 1.

A membership listing of COPSS Committees, as published in THE AMERICAN STATISTICIAN, follows:

<u>Year</u>	<u>Month</u>	<u>Page</u>
1963	February	31
1965	April	61
1966	April	44
1967	April	48
1968	April	40
1969	February	39
1970	April	48
1971	April	47
1972	April	55

In addition to the above citations in AMSTAT, the following relate to work on COPSS Committees:

"Brochure on Statistics as a Career", April, 1962, page 4.

"AAAS Elects Statisticians as Vice Presidents", April, 1962, page 4.

Ullman, M. B. "Statistics Section (U) of the AAAS", February, 1964, page 9.

Halperin, M., Hartley, H. O. (Chm.), and Hoel, P. G. "Recommended Standards for Statistical Symbols and Notation", June, 1965, page 12.

The Academic Programs Committee, through the work of Franklin Graybill on several CUPM publications relating to statistics and of Paul Minton in preparing a list for AMSTAT (October 1970, December 1971) of U. S. and Canadian schools offering degrees in statistics, has been most beneficial.

The work of the Bernard Greenberg committee on preparing the Careers in Statistics brochure is particularly commendable as evidence by the fact that several hundred thousand copies of the brochure have been distributed. A new committee is preparing a revised edition.

The work of other committees has helped considerably to achieve the goals desired of COPSS. In order to further these efforts, it is suggested that the committee members be placed on a rotating basis of three-year terms whenever possible, that certain members be considered ex-officio members of the committees, that the Committee for Liaison with Other Statistical Societies be studied to find more effective means of communication between societies, and that the Executive Committee of COPSS consider holding additional meetings to consider ways of strengthening statistics in the scientific community and nationally.